

# Barney Rescues an Old Lady

By Shirley Young



The Jacksons and Barney the cat lived in a cottage that was one of seven cottages in a row in a small country village. Barney (as you know) was a very nosy, inquisitive cat and every morning after breakfast it was his habit to go for a walk around the village to see what was going on.

On this particular spring morning he came out of his back door, stretched and yawned, and then started off on his daily walk. He took the path that went along the back of the seven cottages, which passed through their gardens right by their back doors and kitchen windows.

Barney trotted down the path but slowed down as he came to cottage number seven. He expected to be greeted by his old friend, the elderly Mrs Hurley, who always came to the door to talk to him, and often invited him into her kitchen for tit-bits of food.

But this morning her back door was closed and the kitchen windows were shut. Barney paused and meowed loudly but no one came. He felt disappointed because he always enjoyed the fuss Mrs Hurley made of him as she gently stroked his soft fur and asked him what he would like to eat.

However, Barney shrugged to himself and again set off along the path. But he had only gone a little way when he hesitated and stopped. His tail stood stiffly upright and twitching as his brain ticked over. It was so unlike Mrs Hurley not to be in. Barney had heard Mummy say that Mrs Hurley almost never went out. Her daughter, who also lived in the village, did her shopping for her. So where could she be?

Barney turned around and went back to her cottage. Standing up on his back legs he beat a loud tattoo on the door with his front paws. "Meow - Meow - Meow," he called loudly.

Then Barney stopped and listened intently with his sharp ears, but there was only silence - no sound of the old lady shuffling across the floor to open the door for him. Barney moved back and looked up at the wide windowsill beneath her kitchen window where two flower pots stood, full of wallflowers in bloom.

Now Mrs Hurley had told Barney that he was never to jump up on the windowsill because he might knock off her flower pots and smash them. But on this occasion Barney felt justified in jumping up so that he could look into her window. So with one spring from his powerful back legs he flew up and lightly landed on the window ledge. Unfortunately, Barney was a very fat cat and his large fluffy tail knocked one of the flower pots.

CRASH!! Over it went! It fell to the ground shattering into tiny pieces, with soil and flowers scattered everywhere. But Barney took no notice. He was busy rubbing his head against the window, trying to peer into the darkened room.

Gradually his eyes adjusted to the gloom of the kitchen, and he could see inside clearly. And there, on the floor, he saw Mrs Hurley! She was lying absolutely still.

Barney's heart began to beat fast. He knew that something was dreadfully wrong and that he must fetch help quickly. So he jumped down and raced back along the path to his own house. He shot through the back door to where Mummy stood ironing in the kitchen.

"Hello Barney! You're back early today!" She exclaimed. "It's not time for lunch yet, you know. You've just had your breakfast." Barney rubbed urgently against her legs, meowed and went to the back door, waiting for Mummy to follow him. But Mummy went on steadily ironing.

Barney tried again. This time he pushed his head and body so hard against Mummy's legs that he almost knocked her off balance. He then let out a shrieking "**MEOW**" at the top of his voice.

Startled, Mummy switched off the iron and bent down to him. "Barney, whatever is the matter with you? Are you in pain?" Barney knew that he now had Mummy's full attention, so he ran outside and then paused, glancing back to see if she was coming after him.

"Do you want me to follow you somewhere?" asked Mummy, slowly realising that Barney was trying to tell her something. "At last!" thought Barney and set off at a brisk trot back to Mrs Hurley's cottage with Mummy close behind. As she came to the cottage Mummy immediately saw the broken flower pot and all the mess.

"Oh Barney!" she exclaimed severely. "Did you do all this? You were a very naughty cat to jump up on the windowsill and break her flower pot. But you were a good cat to come and tell me that you did it. I'll sweep it up and then we'll buy Mrs Hurley a new one."

Mummy knocked on the back door with the intention of apologising for the breakage, but there was no reply. Mummy thought this was unusual as Mrs Hurley seldom went out. She then noticed Barney's strange behaviour. He had jumped back onto the windowsill and was almost banging his head against the window, meowing loudly.

Mummy went across to the window and peered in. Normally she would never have dreamt of looking into another person's window, but she felt uneasy, as if something was wrong.

At first she could see nothing, but then as she looked more closely she saw what Barney had seen - Mrs Hurley was lying on the floor!

Mummy gasped and ran for the back door. Fortunately it was not locked, only closed. She rushed in and Barney shot in past her. Mummy knelt down beside Mrs Hurley. She could see by the movement in Mrs Hurley's chest that she was breathing freely, so she gently put her fingers on Mrs Hurley's wrist to check her pulse. It was strong.

Mummy quickly went to the phone and dialled 999 for an ambulance. She then called Mrs Hurley's daughter.

While Mummy was on the phone, Barney rhythmically stroked his soft silky body along Mrs Hurley's outstretched arm. As he bent his head, his furry ears and his whiskers tickled the side of her face. Suddenly Mrs Hurley's eyelids fluttered open and she found herself staring up into Barney's two large golden eyes!

Later that day, Mummy, Daddy and Emma were sitting around the table having their evening meal. Barney sat on the floor nearby, apparently intent on washing his fur coat, but his ears were acutely tuned in to the conversation at the table.

When Mummy had finished explaining what had happened that day, Daddy enquired, "So how is Mrs Hurley now? Did you get in touch with the hospital?"

"Yes," Mummy replied, "and I also spoke to her daughter. Apparently Mrs Hurley's blood pressure was very high and she came over dizzy. She stumbled and fell, and then hit her head on the side of the chair and knocked herself out! It must have happened not long before Barney saw her. But she should be home again soon."

"What an amazing cat Barney is!" Emma cried. "Fancy his realising that she needed help and coming to fetch you like that! It just shows how intelligent he is! I think he should be awarded a medal!"

"I think perhaps he'd prefer a tin of pilchards!" Daddy laughed. And Barney licked his lips in agreement.

*The End*

